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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 003087

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAIR](#) [CN](#) [IN](#) [UNSC](#)

SUBJECT: WEN VISIT WRAP-UP: "SIGNIFICANT BOOST," NO  
PARADIGM SHIFT

REF: NEW DELHI 2758

Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt. Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[11.](#) (C) Summary: Two weeks after Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's "historic" April 9-12 visit to New Delhi (ref A), the initial breathless commentary has given way to a more sober and realistic assessment that no paradigm shift occurred, that Beijing did not exactly endorse India's UNSC bid, and that there is a long way to go in settling the border dispute. The Indians, however, have sensed a new-found respect from Beijing, reflected in China's acknowledgment of India as globally significant, a development for which the MEA credits growing US-India engagement. The MEA told us they pointedly rejected Wen's strong advice that India should disassociate itself from Japan's UNSC bid. End Summary.

Reality Check: No Paradigm Shift  
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[12.](#) (C) MEA Joint Secretary Ashok Kantha (China, Japan) told PolCouns and Poloff on April 22 that while Wen and the PM took important steps, "there has been no paradigm shift, no jump" in relations with China. He noted that there was "complete continuity," in GOI policy, adding that the government has kept former PM Vajpayee, former NSA Mishra, and Opposition Leader Advani fully informed of the border negotiations.

[13.](#) (C) New Delhi is looking for Beijing to be sensitive to India's security concerns as the relationship develops, Kantha continued, noting that China was still in a "state of denial" with regard to its relationship with Pakistan and responsibility for that country's leaky nuclear and missile programs. The J/S remarked that the GOI is comfortable with Beijing's ties with Islamabad, as long as they do not adversely affect India. Taking a realistic view of Beijing's motivations, Kantha added that China's new willingness to engage India was to a considerable extent a function of how Beijing sees the US-India relationship evolving.

UNSC: Play on Words  
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[14.](#) (C) India's goals during the talks focused on tangible results in New Delhi's UNSC campaign and Sikkim, while China's were Indian recognition of its positions on Taiwan and Tibet, Chinese DCM Zheng Qingdian told PolCouns on April [120](#). Three of the four were accommodated in the April 11 Joint Statement (ref A), while the fourth (UNSC) remains elusive, notwithstanding MEA J/S Kantha's optimistic statement that China had "fairly categorically" offered its support for India's UNSC bid. The Indian PM was more cautious in his remarks to Parliament on April 20, quoting the slippery language of the Joint Statement that Beijing "understands" India's aspirations, and "supports" a larger Indian role in the UN (not the UNSC) and international affairs.

[15.](#) (C) Zheng went further, confirming that China "understands" India's ambition but that it is not ready to "support" it. Zheng did not endorse the line we had from an Indian journalist, that Wen had offered a firm, private assurance of PRC support for India's candidacy. While Zheng cited the interest of many other countries in a permanent UNSC seat as one of the reasons for China's reluctance to endorse India's bid, Kantha explained that India having thrown its lot in with Japan is the stumbling block for Beijing. The J/S recalled that during Wen's meeting with the PM, the Chinese leader warned India of damaging its credibility for a seat by supporting Japan so unequivocally, speaking on the issue with great passion, at some length. Kantha said PM Singh pointedly refused to accept this PRC advice. Zheng characterized India as "reluctantly accepting" of China's position on UNSC reform, adding that China and the US' positions on the issue seemed "similar."  
Inching Along on the Border  
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[16.](#) (C) Kantha, who was the primary GOI negotiator for the agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for boundary settlement (ref A), noted that his mandate was to arrive at a political solution, and not a technical one, as that has proven a "dead-end" in negotiations from 1998-2003. He underscored that each of the Guiding Principles had

"operational significance," citing for example the provision for "safeguarding" settled populations which, he argued, boosts India's claim to Tawang, and the decision to use "easily identifiable geographic features," for which the two countries will conduct joint surveys. Asked about the next phase of the negotiations, Kantha flagged the strong GOI expectation that progress will come quickly -- months, not years.

17. (C) Zheng observed that the Guiding Principles came about after years of disagreement because of the changed nature of the countries' relationship and the economic growth that both are experiencing. The discussions included "hard talk" on Sikkim, while the next step would be to conclude a framework for the resolution of their boundary dispute, followed by an actual demarcation of the boundary. While the MEA's Kantha characterized the principles as a milestone, he cautioned that the next phase, which will be negotiated at the Special Representatives level, would be far more difficult, and will require sustained engagement at the senior political level. Lamenting the Chinese tendency to want to put off border settlement while developing other aspects of the India relationship, he noted that although India does not have a specific timeframe in mind, the GOI will push for early resolution.

#### Shades of Partnership

18. (C) In public discussion of the Joint Statement's "Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity," the Indian focus was more on the "strategic partnership," without clarity on what the new level of engagement it would be. The PM, in his April 20 speech to Parliament, described the partnership as "not in the nature of a military pact or alliance, but reflect(ing) a congruence of purpose." Kantha explained further that in January, China had proposed a "Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Amity." New Delhi, however, sought not simply hollow phrases, but Chinese acknowledgment of India's "global role." Two days before Wen's New Delhi meetings, Beijing accepted this formulation, which DCM Zheng characterized as the result of an evolution in the India-China relationship over the past few years from bilateral to "global and international in focus." The Observer Research Foundation's Ambassador MK Rasgotra observed recently that China has begun to recognize India's importance, whereas ten years ago, "they had nothing but contempt."

19. (C) Defining this new level of understanding, Kantha underscored that from India's perspective, the relationship with China should not be limited by their differences, had to have a "global" element, could not progress while postponing settlement of the border dispute, and did not imply a military alliance or "ganging up." While this was significant, Kantha did not ascribe too much importance to the partnership, noting that China has such "partnerships" with everyone from ASEAN to Mexico and even the US. Kantha added that with respect to China, New Delhi and Washington have a similar interest in "ensuring Beijing remains honest."

110. (C) With regard to the dozen agreements listed in the Joint Statement, Zheng said that the texts were not made public at the request of China, while India had supported their release. The full text of two of the most important documents, the "Guiding Principles" and the Line of Actual Control (LAC) military protocol, was publicly available on the day they were signed, and is viewable on the Indian MEA website.

#### People-to-People Falls Flat

11. (C) For their proximity and colossal size, the level of interaction between China and India is quite low. Only 40,000 Indians received visas to go to China in 2004, which is still larger than the number of Chinese traveling south (many to go to Buddhist pilgrimage sites in UP and Bihar). In an attempt to fix this imbalance, and to accommodate the kind of economic ties the two leaders predicted, DCM Zheng said Chinese Eastern Airlines will start operating its Beijing-Shanghai-New Delhi flight three times per week, Air China has proposed a Beijing-Mumbai route, and that a Xinjiang-Srinagar connection as well as South China Airlines service to Calcutta are under consideration. The Xinjiang-Srinagar air link is particularly important, as it could revive the ancient Kashgar trade route, but could also be construed as acknowledging Indian sovereignty over the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

#### Comment

112. (C) For the Indian political class, the most important outcome of the Wen visit may be the newfound seriousness with which China is now approaching India. The GOI is very much

aware that deepening US-India relations are a factor in Beijing's calculus, and can be expected to use this to New Delhi's advantage, which is a benefit to the United States. While New Delhi is open to these new approaches from Beijing, we note a definite sense of caution in GOI assessments of the Wen visit which reflects lingering historical mistrust, concern over the PLA build-up in India's periphery, and uncertainty over where exactly Beijing stands with respect to India and the UNSC. Wen's visit tipped off a triangular Security Council drama between India, Japan and China, the next act of which will be played out during Japanese PM Koizumi's visit to New Delhi April 28-30 (septel).

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